

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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P 290507Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5573

INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, VS, VN, PINT, PFOR

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE GVN, PRG, AND THE DRV

REF: CANBERRA 2237

1. SUMMARY: THE FRONT PAGE OF THE APRIL 29 EDITION OF THE MELBOURNE AGE CARRIES THE FULL TEXT OF GOA CABLES SENT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO TO HANOI AND SAIGON WHICH CONFIRM THE APRIL 8 STATEMENT BY SHADOW FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREW PEACOCK THAT THE CABLES SHOWED THE GOA'S BIAS IN FAVOR OF HANOI. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ON APRIL 9 HAD SAID QTE THERE IS NO TRUTH WHATEVER IN THE (PEACOCK) ALLEGATIONS. THE COMMUNICATIONS I SENT TO HANOI AND SAIGON WERE SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME. END QTE. THE AGE ALSO CARRIES A SCATHING EDITORIAL DENOUNCING THE DUPLEXITY OF THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT'S INDOCHINA POLICY. COMMENT: THE PUBLICATION OF THESE CABLES WILL CREATE A POLITICAL STORM IN AUSTRALIA AND MAY HAVE A DAMAGING EFFECT ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPUTATION FOR VERACITY. END SUMMARY.

2. TEXT OF SECRET CABLE TO AUSTRALIA'S AMBASSADOR IN HANOI:

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QTE. WE WISH YOU TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THE DRV (NORTH VIETNAM) AND PRG (THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM) AT A SUITABLE SENIOR LEVEL TO REINFORCE THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER OF 13 MARCH TO DRV FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. TRINH, AND TO STATE THE AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRESENT FIGHTING IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS.

3. QTE IN ADDITION TO HANDING A COPY OF MR. WHITLAM'S STATEMENT MADE TODAY, YOU SHOULD SAY THAT:

QTE A. WE WOULD GENUINELY LIKE TO SEE IN SAIGON A GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL GENUINELY NEGOTIATE FOR REUNIFICATION AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE PARIS AGREEMENTS.

QTE B. WE APPRECIATE THAT THIEU (SOUTH VIETNAM'S PRESIDENT UNTIL HIS RESIGNATION ON APRIL 21) HAS GIVEN NO INDICATIONS THAT HE IS WILLING TO DO THAT, AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS THE SENSE OF FRUSTRATION WHICH HAS GIVEN RISE TO RENEWED RECOURSE TO MILITARY PRESSURE ON THIEU ALTHOUGH IT CANNOT CONDONE THAT RECOURSE.

QTE IN THIS CONNECTION, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BELIEVES IT WOULD HAVE A MOST FAVORABLE EFFECT IF THE PRG WERE TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT RECENT MILITARY OPERATIONS HAD HAD THE AIM OF APPLYING PRESSURE TO SECURE THE OBSERVANCE OF THE IGNORED POLITICAL PROVISIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND THAT THE OPERATIONS WOULD CEASE WHEN SATISFACTORY ASSURANCES WERE OFFERED BY SAIGON THAT THESE POLITICAL PROVISIONS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED.

QTE C. WE SHALL BE URGING ON THE THIEU GOVERNMENT THE NECESSITY OF CARRYING OUT IN GOOD FAITH THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 4 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, ESPECIALLY ARTICLE 12 ON THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD (NCNR) AND CHAPTER 5 ON REUNIFICATION.

QTE D. WE CONTINUE TO HOPE (MR. WHITLAM'S LETTER TO DRV FOREIGN MINISTER MR. TRINH OF 13 MARCH) THAT IT WILL SOON BE POSSIBLE FOR THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT TO RESUME WORKING TOGETHER -

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WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS OR UNDER NEW ARRANGEMENTS - TOWARDS A PEACEFUL AND ENDURING SETTLEMENT IN VIETNAM, AND THAT THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT WILL SO ACT AS TO ENABLE THE VIOLENCE WHICH IS CAUSING SO MUCH SUFFERING TO BE REDUCED, AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BROUGHT TO AN END.

4. QTE. YOU MAY ALSO CONFIRM WITH THE DRV AND PRG THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS CONTRIBUTING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES (WITH WHOM THE PRG HAS BEEN IN CONTACT) TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM, AND THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT STANDS READY TO CONTRIBUTE GENEROUSLY TO THE LONGER TERM TASK OF POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

5. QTE. WE APPRECIATE THAT THE FOREGOING APPROACH MAY BE INTERPRETED BY THE DRV AND PRG AS SIMPLY AN ATTEMPT TO CUT ACROSS AN INEVITABLE MILITARY VICTORY. THE ACTING MINISTER NEVERTHELESS CONSIDERS THAT THE APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE AT THIS POINT OF THE WAR AND NOTES THE CONTINUING STATEMENTS TO YOU AND PUBLICLY ABOUT THE PRG DESIRE FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT CONFORMING WITH THE POLITICAL PROVISIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS.

6. QTE. PLEASE ADVISE US OF THE DRV AND PRG RESPONSES. END QTE.

7. TEXT OF SECRET CABLE TO AUSTRALIA'S AMBASSADOR IN SAIGON:

8. QTE. WE WISH YOU TO TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY IN DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF THE RVN (GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM) TO REINFORCE THE POSITION EXPRESSED IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER OF 13 MARCH TO PRESIDENT THIEU THAT:

QTE A. ALL PARTIES IN VIETNAM WILL RESUME WORKING TOGETHER - WHETHER WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED MACHINERY OR UNDER NEW ARRANGEMENTS - TOWARDS A PEACEFUL AND ENDURING SETTLEMENT IN VIETNAM.

QTE B. A PRIME REQUIREMENT IS FOR THE RVN TO CARRY OUT IN GOOD FAITH THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 4 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, ESPECIALLY ARTICLE 12

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ON THE NCNRC (NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD), AND CHAPTER 5 ON REUNIFICATION AND TO STATE THE VIEW THAT UNTIL THAT REQUIREMENT IS MET THERE IS NO CHANCE OF THERE BEING AN EARLY END, OR EVEN SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION, IN THE VIOLENCE WHICH IS CAUSING SO MUCH SUFFERING.

9. QTE YOU SHOULD ALSO MAKE USE OF THE PM'S PRESS STATEMENTS TO SAY (SEE SEPARATE TELEGRAM).

10. QTE WE SHOULD LIKE YOU IF AND AS CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT TO MAKE THIS AUSTRALIAN POSITION KNOWN TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT WHO MIGHT YET PLAY AN INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL ROLE.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

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AMCONSUL SYDNEY

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11. QTE. PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED OF WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO DO. END QTE

12. TEXT OF EDITORIAL FROM THE AGE, APRIL 29, 1975:

13. QTE. IN DIPLOMACY, AS IN WAR, TRUTH AND HUMANITY ARE
APT TO BE SACRIFICED IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL SURVI-
VAL OR SECURITY. BUT ON THE BASIS OF WHAT VITAL NATIONAL
INTEREST, WHAT HIGH PRINCIPLE OF STATECRAFT, CAN THE WHIT-
LAM GOVERNMENT JUSTIFY THE APPARENT DUPLEXITY AND
CALLOUSNESS OF ITS RECENT VIETNAM POLICY? THE GOVERNMENT'S
PROFESSSED ATTITUDE OF NEUTRALITY AND NON-INVOLVEMENT IN THE
MILITARY STRUGGLE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, OTHER THAN TO
PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, IS BEING
INCREASINGLY EXPOSED AS HYPOCRITICAL HUMBUG. EVEN-HANDEDNESS

IN VIETNAM SEEMS TO BE CHARACTERISED BY AN INGRATIATING HAND-
SHAKE FOR HANOI AND THE POLITICAL WING OF THE VIET CONG, AND
A BACKHANDED SWIPE FOR NOT ONLY THE FALLEN GOVERNMENT BUT
THE FRIGHTENED REFUGEES OF SOUTH VIETNAM.

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14. QTE. NONE OF THE EXPLANATIONS AND EXCUSES OFFERED BY AUSTRALIA'S ABSENT AND ACTING MINISTERS - THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF APPARENTLY BEING INCOMMUNICADO IN THE ANDES OR THE CARIBBEAN - HAS DENIED OR DIMINISHED THE DEPLORABLE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT HAS ABANDONED SOME 200 SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO AN UNCERTAIN, PROBABLY UNPLEASANT, FATE UNDER THE COMMUNIST TAKE-OVER THAT NOW SEEMS IMMINENT. THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO WOULD OR SHOULD HAVE QUALIFIED FOR SANCTUARY IN AUSTRALIA AND COULD HAVE BEEN AIRLIFTED TO SAFETY BY THE RAAF. THEY WERE LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PROCRASTINATED UNTIL A FEW DAYS BEFORE IT CLOSED ITS EMBASSY IN SAIGON IN ANNOUNCING GUIDELINES (BY NO MEANS GENEROUS) FOR ELIGIBLE REFUGEES. EVEN THEN, MORE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED HAD CANBERRA NOT INSISTED ON AN UNNECESSARILY PUNCTILIOUS REGARD FOR SOUTH VIETNAMESE EXIT VISAS. FOR THE ACTING FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER (MR. MORRISON) NOW TO SAY THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE WELCOME IF THEY CAN ESCAPE TO BANGKOK (WHERE THE THAIS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY TURN THEM BACK) OR MANILA SOUNDS MORE LIKE A CRUEL TAUNT THAN A SERIOUS OFFER.

15. QTE. SUSPICIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S SHAMEFUL MIS-HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM HAS BEEN DUE TO POLITICAL BIAS RATHER THAN ADMINISTRATIVE INCOMPETENCE GAIN CREDENCE FROM THE DISCLOSURE IN THE AGE TODAY OF THE DISPARATE CABLES SENT BY MR. WHITLAM EARLIER THIS MONTH TO THE AUSTRALIAN AM-BASSADORS IN HANOI AND SAIGON. THE TEXTS OF THESE MESSAGES SUBSTANTIALLY CONFIRM THE ALLEGATIONS WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER EMPHASITICALLY DENIED IN PARLIAMENT, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CLEARLY BIASED IN FAVOR OF THE NORTH. OUR ENVOY IN HANOI WAS ASKED TO CONVEY TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIET-NAM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S ALMOST SYMPATHETIC UNDER-STANDING OF THE FRUSTRATIONS WHICH LED THEM TO TAKE THE MILITARY OFFENSIVE (WHICH PIOUSLY, IT COULD NOT CONDONE) AGAINST THE THIEU REGIME.

16. QTE. NOT ONLY THAT, MR. WHITLAM THEN TOOK THE UNPARALLELED STEP OF SUGGESTING TO THE SELF-STYLED PRG - WHICH AUSTRALIA DOES NOT OFFICIALLY RECOGNISE - HOW IT COULD BEST PROMOTE ITS CAUSE ABROAD. BY CONTRAST, THE CURT CABLE TO SAIGON SHOWED NO SUCH SOLICITUDE FOR THE FEELINGS OR INTERESTS OF

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THE BELEAGUERED GOVERNMENT THERE. THE PRIME MINISTER SIMP-

LY OFFERED THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS THE BENEFIT OF HIS ADVICE ON HOW THE WAR SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO AN END. IN HARPING ON CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE PARIS ACCORDS, THE CABLE IGNORED NOT ONLY THE PRG'S INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE TO THE PROPOSED POLITICAL TERMS FOR A SETTLEMENT, BUT THE PARIS AGREEMENTS' INSISTENCE ON PEACEFUL STEPS TOWARDS REUNIFICATION.

17. QTE. THESE CABLES - WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO TABLE OR EVEN TO SHOW PRIVATELY TO THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION - SEEM TO CONFIRM THE OPPOSITION'S ACCUSATIONS OF DUPLICITY AND HYPOCRISY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TO THE TWO VIETNAMS. MORE THAN THAT, THEY PROVIDE STRIKING EVIDENCE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DECEIVED - AND WE WOULD PUT IT NO HIGHER THAN THAT AT THIS STAGE - PARLIAMENT AND THE PUBLIC IN DECLARING THERE WAS INNER QTE NO TRUTH WHATEVER END INNER QTE IN THE ALLEGATIONS FIRST MADE BY THE OPPOSITION'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN, MR. PEACOCK. MR. PEACOCK DID NOT QUOTE VERBATIM FROM THE CABLE TO HANOI BUT HE GAVE A SUBSTANTIALLY ACCURATE INTERPRETATION OF ITS MEANING. WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION? WE WILL AWAIT A FULL EXPLANATION, BUT FOR THE TIME BEING THE MISERABLE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT OUR GOVERNMENT HAS BETRAYED REFUGEES AND DEALT IN A TWO-FACED WAY WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS - AND WITH THE PARLIAMENT AND PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA. WE AWAIT A CONSIDERED RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THE SLIGHTLY INANE EXPLANATIONS FROM THE ACTING MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MR. MORRISON) YESTERDAY WILL NOT DO. THIS IS A MATTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, AND NO ONE ELSE. HE MADE THE DECISIONS IN QUESTION; HE DELIVERED THE PARLIAMENTARY RESPONSES. JAMAICA OR NOT, PRIME MINISTERS' CONFERENCE OR NOT, THIS IS A TIME FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO EXPLAIN, IF HE CAN. END QTE.
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